

Submission  
No 434

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

I am a 33 year old woman living in [REDACTED] Sydney and I gave birth to a healthy baby girl at [REDACTED] Hospital in January 2015.

My actual labor was okay. I feel like I would've preferred not to have an epidural, but I wasn't prepared for how to deal with the intense pain of labor & didn't feel empowered to advocate for a drug free birth.

The trauma I experienced was actually the night after I had my baby. Thinking about it 8 years on still makes me cry & feel so overwhelmed.

About 24 hours after I delivered my baby I started getting pain in my abdomen. This pain was all over my abdomen. The midwife told me to walk up and down the hall as she thought it might have been after birth pains. I did this with my husband's help until I could barely stand as the pain increased dramatically. The next few hours consisted of the midwives and doctors trying to figure out what was wrong. I was given buscopan. I was sent to get an x-ray done. While I was pushed to the X-ray room in my bed the nurse & the orderlie didn't say anything to me. I was crying & upset and they said nothing. When I was back on the ward I was also given morphine straight into my abdomen. Both these pain killers did nothing to stop the pain. I tried so hard to be calm, but the pain was so intense and I was in absolute agony and couldn't help screaming & crying.

After getting an ultrasound of my bladder it was discovered that my bladder was very full, I think there were litres of wee in it. This was due to swelling after birth. They had asked me earlier in the day if I had gone to the toilet and I had, but I didn't realise that the urine output wasn't enough and they hadn't asked me how much wee I had done. They inserted a catheter and it took a few tries and was very painful. My husband became very stressed and was emotionally unable to handle watching me in so much pain and he left at midnight to go home & have some rest. The midwives took my baby out of the room. I decided not to look at the time as this caused me stress, but I do believe that it was about 1-1.30pm when a doctor talked to me about giving me more morphine. I begged him to give me something else as the morphine didn't even put a dent into my pain. After this the lady in my room was transferred to another room. I didn't see or hear from my midwife or any doctors for a very long time and they shut the door of my room. I could hear my baby crying & it broke my heart. What felt like a considerable time later, perhaps 2 hours, a female doctor came into my room to discuss giving me pethidine. She was accompanied by 2 or 3 midwives. They left the room and came back a while later to give me the pethidine. After it was administered to me the pain subsided and they brought my baby back into the room and I was able to feed her. After this I slept and so did my baby.

Unfortunately I do not remember the exact time they gave me pethidine, I think it was about 3am, but cannot be sure. It certainly took a long time as the pain started around 8pm, my husband left at midnight and it seemed quite a long time after that.

The pain I was in was a 10 out of 10 pain. I was in absolute agony and my pain management was far from adequate. I was also separated from my baby due to the fact that it took so long for the doctors to give me a pain medication that worked. This grieves me to no end.

I was also made to feel isolated when they shut the door on my room. I realise that it was so other mums would not be able to hear me, but this action made me feel small and insignificant. It made me feel unsupported.

The female doctor who gave the go ahead to give me pethidine was obnoxious and rude. She made insensitive comments to me pertaining to her belief that I didn't have the ability to know what real pain was because I had an epidural during the birth of my daughter. She also made me feel ashamed when she described how I was a mum now and should start acting like it. These comments were uncalled for and they took me by surprise. Even now, it makes me unbelievably sad when I think about what she said.

This experience effected me, my child and my husband in ways that cannot be measured. It has been taken a big emotional toll on me. The second night of my baby's life should have been one of bonding, but it was a night that tore my family apart. I really do believe that it took too long to administer a pain relief that was effective, especially when the reason for the pain was established early in the night and steps had been taken to drain my bladder.

I praise the midwife that was on an afternoon and evening shift who helped me with my breastfeeding and when she saw me in pain advocated for a quick diagnosis of my condition. I wish her shift continued throughout the night.